

A SUDDEN ELEVATION.

(Original)

John Meriweather was what the world would call a self made man. The reason why he was a self made man was because he had been given by his Creator both the desire and the ability to be such. He had saved his pennies as a boy, paying for an education by working while studying, had denied himself when a young man in order to save capital and had forged ahead rapidly by a remarkable capacity for hard work. He now lived in a fine house, drove his horses, was powerful and courted, yet he worked as hard as ever. One day he overheard his butler lamenting to his coachman that the wealth of the world was very badly distributed and declaring that an equitable way of arranging the good things would be for the rich and the poor to change places once every ten years.

"Peter," called the master, "come here."

Peter would have been embarrassed at having been overheard, but he had got the equality bee in his bonnet, and he approached his master somewhat defiantly.

"Peter," continued Meriweather, "I've been working very hard lately and need a rest. I want you to be my representative. Go and dress yourself like a gentleman and come back."

At 9 o'clock the next morning Peter sat in his master's chair in his master's office, opening the mail. Meriweather was there giving him instructions for the first day's work. His affairs were in good condition and easily managed. Indeed, there was little or nothing to do during the day but attend a meeting of directors of the Eureka Copper company at 3 in the afternoon. Peter, armed with an order to act for his master, went to the meeting. Some surprise was manifested on the part of the other directors that this Peter Conover should represent one to whom they were accustomed to look for a final decision on all important discussions.

The question came up as to whether the company should issue bonds for some intended improvements or pay for them out of the dividends. After a long discussion over the matter Mr. Conover's views were asked. Peter, resolved not to acknowledge any indecision, remarked that it would be well to issue bonds.

"Why so?" asked the chairman. Peter turned flaming red and said nothing. The president stepped to the telephone, called up John Meriweather and asked his views on the question under consideration. They were given promptly, with the best of reasons, and the meeting adjourned.

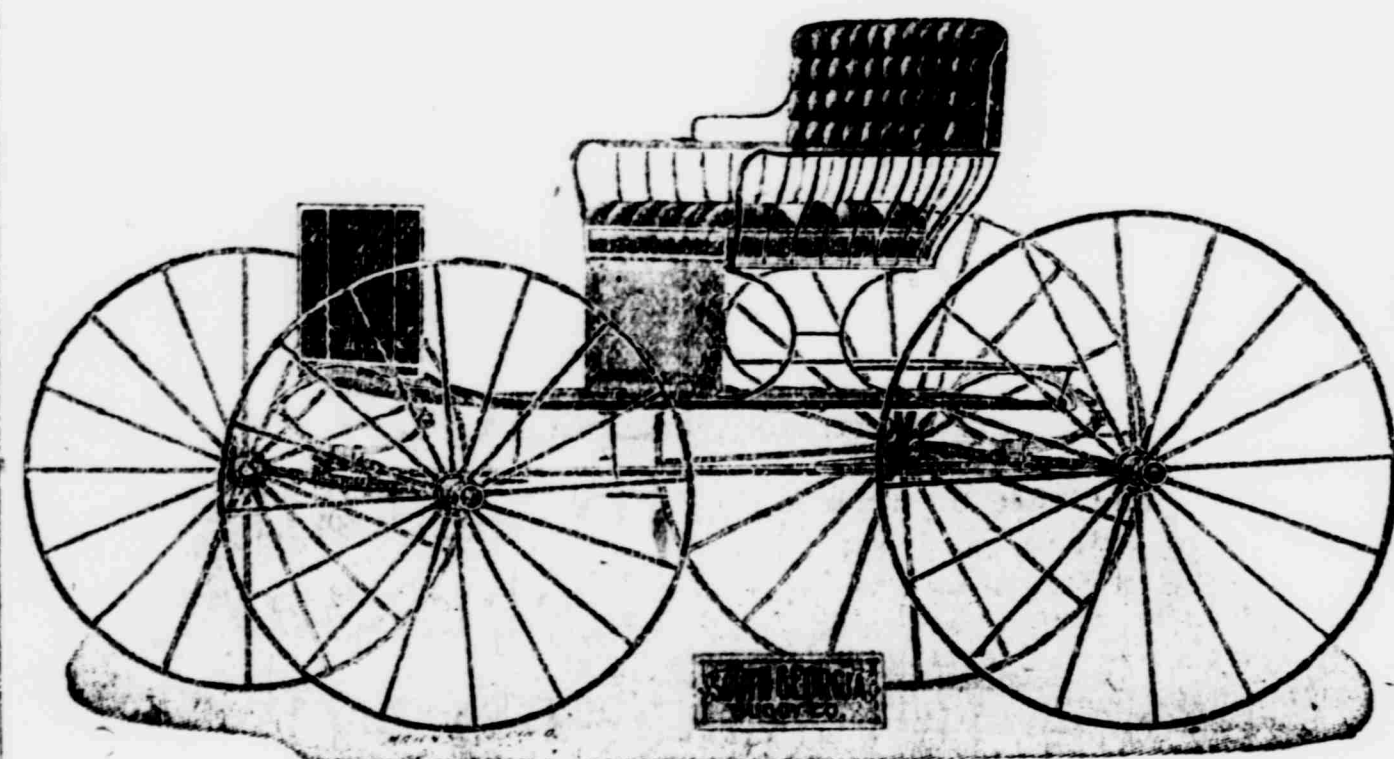
When Peter went home he concluded to have a drive before dinner. On reaching the house he learned that his master had just left on a trip. This both pleased and alarmed him. He would have free scope to enjoy the luxuries of his position, but no one would be on hand to refer to in business matters. His ride was interfered with by an architect, who was erecting a warehouse for Mr. Meriweather. He laid his plans on the table and asked for instructions. Peter was tempted to ask the man to wait till his master's return, but remembered that he was his master. Besides, the architect could not wait. Mr. Meriweather was called

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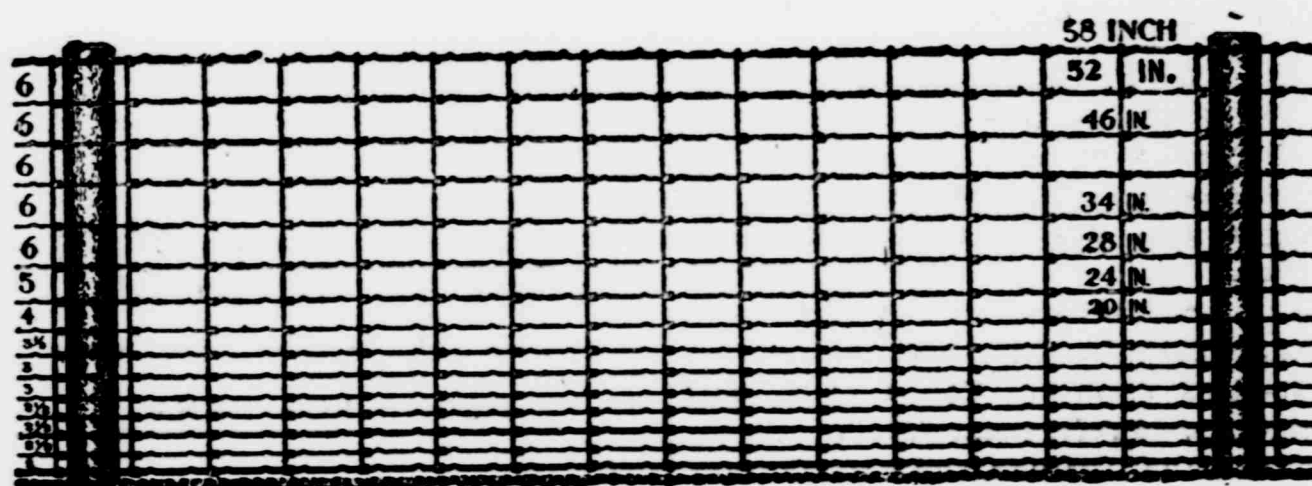
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up on the long distance telephone, and the points submitted to him.

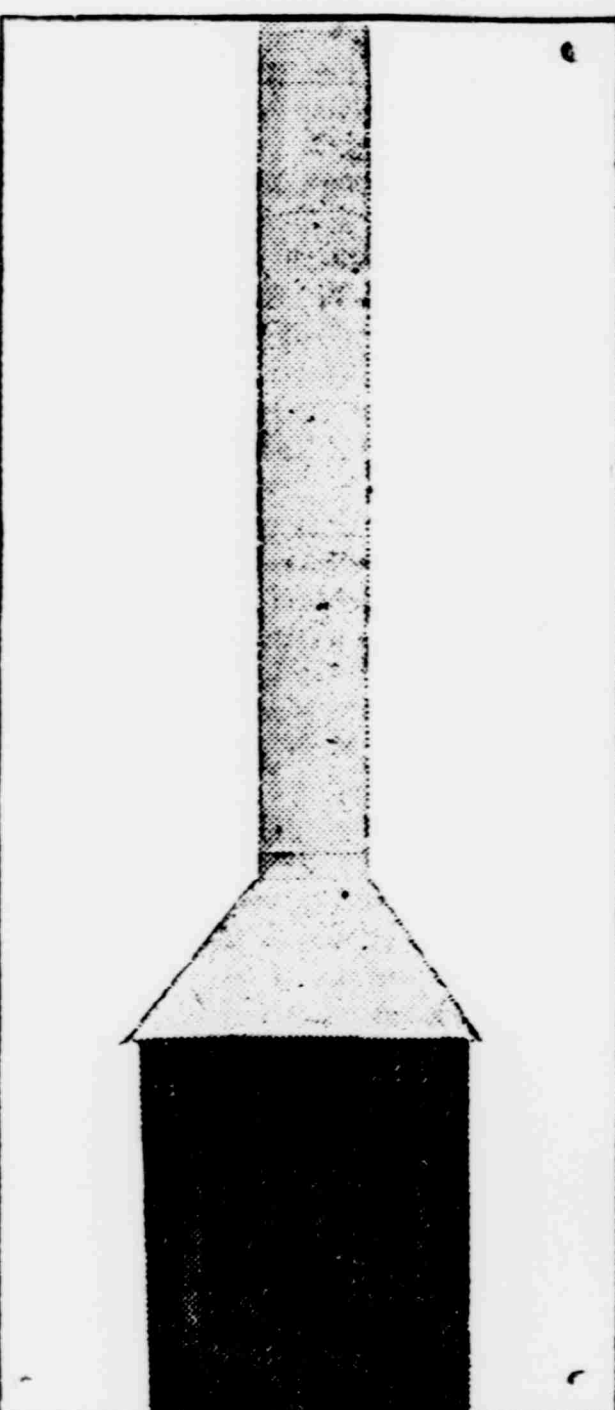
A fine dinner was set before the representative of his master, but Peter's appetite was somewhat interfered with by the realization that he was his master only in name, not in reality. In the evening he went to the theater; but, since he did not care to take with him any of the servants, he was obliged to go alone. The play was one of Shakespeare's, and Peter could not understand what the actors were talking about. When the play was over he looked in at one of the swell restaurants, but his new position had tired him, and he needed some real refreshment, so he went to a low grade saloon and ordered a dish of pork and beans and a mug of ale. He felt somewhat out of place in his fine costume, but he was alone while he ate, and the meal was Peter's only bit of comfort during the first day of his playing the gentleman capitalist.

The next morning Peter opened his master's letters. Fortunately he could read, but unfortunately he did not understand them, and if he had understood he would not have known what replies to make. Peter had supposed that all he would have to do in his new position would be to cut off coupons and cash checks for dividends. He now saw that he could not hold the position creditably for an hour. He concluded to let the letters go unanswered, have a good time till his master returned and then resign.

Putting a hundred dollars in his pocket, he took it home to his family. His wife, instead of laying it by for a rainy day or to get the children clothes, spent it in a trip to the country. Peter could not go with them in his fine apparel, so, not knowing what to do, he went to his favorite saloon and ordered a slice of ham and a glass of beer. Then he sat repeating his beer till midnight.

The next day Peter did not open the letters. He stacked them up, and they continued to be stacked till his master's return. One morning John Meriweather walked into the office and saw Peter sitting before his desk with a bored expression and stacks of unopened letters before him. Peter acknowledged that his training had not fitted him to represent his master, and it was a happy day for him when he donned his livery and returned to the management of household affairs.

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